

MAR 21 2007

Application Serial No. 10/657,583
Reply to Office Action dated December 21, 2006

EXPEDITED HANDLING PROCEDURE
PURSUANT TO 37 C.F.R. § 1.116

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-2. (canceled)

3. (previously presented) An apparatus for folding an insert for placement within the opening of a taco shell, the apparatus comprising:

- a frame;
- a first pivot shaft rotatably connected to the frame;
- a second pivot shaft rotatably connected to the frame;
- a first lever arm substantially perpendicularly connected to the first pivot shaft;
- a second lever arm substantially perpendicularly connected to the second pivot shaft;
- a first folder finger substantially perpendicularly connected to the first pivot shaft and adapted to engage the insert;
- a second folder finger substantially perpendicularly connected to the second pivot shaft and adapted to engage the insert; and
- a spring having a first end and a second end, wherein the first end is connected to the first lever arm and the second end is connected to the second lever arm.

4. (previously presented) An apparatus for folding an insert for placement within the opening of a taco shell, the apparatus comprising:

- a frame;
- a first pivot shaft rotatably connected to the frame;
- a second pivot shaft rotatably connected to the frame;

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a first lever arm substantially perpendicularly connected to the first pivot shaft;
a second lever arm substantially perpendicularly connected to the second pivot shaft;
a first folder finger substantially perpendicularly connected to the first pivot shaft and adapted to engage the insert;
a second folder finger substantially perpendicularly connected to the second pivot shaft and adapted to engage the insert; and
an insert magazine connected to the frame for holding the insert prior to delivery to the first and second folding fingers, the insert magazine comprising a channel and a slide block, the slide block having an angled leading face and adapted to slidably displace within the channel, the channel adapted to receive inserts.

5. (previously presented) An apparatus for placing an insert within a nested group of taco shells, the apparatus comprising:

means for retaining a nested group of taco shells;
a horizontal shaft; and
a vacuum cup adapted to transport the insert to the retaining means, said vacuum cup being supported off of a first pillow block having a bore therethrough for receiving the horizontal shaft.

6. (original) The apparatus of claim 5 further comprising a horizontal timing belt and a servo motor, wherein the belt is routed around a drive pulley and a second pulley and interconnected to the first pillow block, wherein the servo motor is interconnected to the drive pulley.

7. (original) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the servo motor causes the timing belt to displace the first pillow block along the horizontal shaft, thereby causing the vacuum cup to displace horizontally.

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8. (original) The apparatus of claim 5 further comprising a vertical shaft and a second pillow block, wherein the second pillow block is supported off of the first pillow block and has a bore therethrough for receiving the vertical shaft, wherein the vacuum cup is suspended off of the vertical shaft.

9. (original) The apparatus of claim 8 further comprising an air cylinder adapted to vertically displace the vertical shaft through the second pillow block, thereby causing the vacuum cup to displace vertically.

10. (original) The apparatus of claim 5 further comprising a cam supported off of the first pillow block, wherein the cam is adapted to open a pair of folder lever arms.

11-17. (canceled)

18-31. (canceled)

32. (previously presented) An assembly for folding an insert for placement within the opening of a taco shell, nesting individual taco shells to form a nested group of taco shells, placing the insert within the nested group of taco shells, and aligning the nested group of taco shells comprising:

a first apparatus for folding the insert for placement within the opening of a taco shell of the nested group of taco shells including: a frame; a first pivot shaft rotatably connected to the frame; a second pivot shaft rotatably connected to the frame; a first lever arm perpendicularly connected to the first pivot shaft; a second lever arm perpendicularly connected to the second pivot shaft; a first folder finger perpendicularly connected to the first pivot shaft and adapted to engage the insert; a second folder finger perpendicularly connected to the second pivot shaft and adapted to engage the insert; a spring having a first end and a second end, wherein the first end is connected to the first lever arm and the second end is connected to the second lever arm; and an insert magazine connected to the frame for holding the insert prior to delivery to the first and second folding fingers,

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the insert magazine comprising a channel and a slide block, the slide block having an angled leading face and adapted to slidably displace within the channel, the channel adapted to receive inserts;

a second apparatus for nesting the individual taco shells to form the nested group of taco shells including: a nester conveyor adapted to transport taco shells to a taco shell nesting station and having a first operational speed and a second operational speed, wherein the first operational speed is greater than the second operational speed; and a first sensor adapted to detect the passage of taco shells traveling to the nesting station, wherein the nester conveyor shifts from the first operational speed to the second operational speed when the passage of a predetermine number of taco shells has been detected by the first sensor;

a third apparatus for placing the insert within the nested group of taco shells including: a horizontal shaft; and a vacuum cup adapted to transport the insert and supported off of a first pillow block having a bore therethrough for receiving the horizontal shaft; and

a fourth apparatus for aligning the nested group of taco shells including: a convergence volume adapted to hold the nested group of taco shells; a pair of opposed vertical surfaces forming two sides of the convergence volume and adapted to converge towards each other to align the nested group of taco shells; and a structure located above the convergence volume and adapted to limit the vertical travel of the nested group of taco shells as aligning occurs.